



## ***AOT in Action***

### **TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!**

*Issue 129 – October 10, 2006*

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

#### **A Message from the Director:**

Good morning.

Last week, Governor Napolitano announced the recipients of the Governor's Rural Tourism Development Grant Program, which will allocate \$673,779 to 16 entities across the state this year. In the second year of the program, both funding and the amount of award recipients have increased, making this one of AOT's most important grant programs. The program is centered on promoting economic development to enhance the tourism experience. The funding that communities and organizations receive from the Rural Tourism Development Grant program has a visible and significant impact, as the awards can be used for "bricks and mortar" projects that will have a direct effect on the visitor experience. AOT was thrilled with the results of last year's inaugural program and the excitement it generated in our rural communities. The Rural Tourism Development Grant Program has enabled organizations such as the Zane Grey Cabin Foundation to install audio stations in order for the exhibits to be more clearly understood by visitors, and the White Mountain Apache Tribe Heritage Program to improve its visitor parking area with asphalt paving and picnic tables. We look forward to expanding on this success with this year's program and creating a memorable and enjoyable experience for all visitors to Arizona.

In my letter a couple of weeks ago, I mentioned that an Arizona delegation participated in the first-ever Travel Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., meeting with Arizona lawmakers to discuss the importance of the travel industry in our state. As the Congressional session came to an end this year, it was obvious that our voices were heard when they extended the deadline for the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative until June 1, 2009. We have put the entire transcript of a letter from Travel Industry Association of America President Roger Dow in this issue of AOT in Action so you can be up-to-date on the significance of this development.

Have a great week.



Margie A. Emmermann  
Director  
Arizona Office of Tourism

## AOT News Flash

### AOT Presents “Economic Impact of the Travel Industry in Arizona” Workshop Series

Please mark your calendars for AOT’s newest workshop series, featuring information from the first full-scale “Economic Impact of the Travel Industry in Arizona” report. The economic impact workshops will be held at five locations throughout the state, with each presentation being tailored to the counties that are near that location. The Economic Impact of the Travel Industry in Arizona report features county level travel data on each of Arizona’s 15 counties, which will give communities invaluable information on the amount of spending and number of jobs tied to the travel industry in their area. This type of data is vital for communities to explain the value of the travel industry to key stakeholders and secure funding for tourism programs. The workshops will focus on providing communities with methods for using the valuable information in the report to achieve their objectives. Please see below workshop schedule for which counties will be reported at which workshop. To register for a workshop please contact Sarah Martins at [smartins@azot.gov](mailto:smartins@azot.gov) or by phone at 602-364-3687.

October 18, 2006

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Best Western Payson Inn

801 North Beeline Highway 87

Payson, Arizona 85547

Counties to be covered: Yavapai, Gila, Graham and Greenlee

October 20, 2006

1 p.m. – 3p.m.

Little America

2515 East Butler Avenue

Flagstaff, AZ

Counties to be covered: Coconino, Navajo and Apache

November 1, 2006

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Golf and Tennis Resort

10000 North Oracle Road

Tucson, AZ 85737

Counties to be covered: Pima, Cochise and Santa Cruz

November 8, 2006  
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak Resort  
7677 North 16th Street  
Phoenix AZ 85020  
Counties to be covered: Maricopa and Pinal

## **Trippin' with AOT**

### **AOT Brings Taste of Arizona to the Big Apple and Boston**

Last week, AOT's Media Relations Division traveled to New York City and Boston to meet with travel writers and hold a media marketplace event. AOT was joined by more than 20 partners from around the state on Oct. 5 for the Arizona Media Marketplace, which was attended by more than 75 top travel writers from publications such as Bon Appetit, The New York Times, Town & Country and many more. AOT organizes a media marketplace event in New York City every other year, alternating it with Los Angeles, the other U.S. media capital. In addition, AOT also hosted a small media event in the Gourmet magazine dining room and kitchen, featuring a cooking class with Gourmet Executive Chef and TV Food Network personality Sara Moulton. Prior to arriving in New York, AOT teamed up with the Phoenix and Scottsdale CVBs to meet with travel media in the Boston area. For more information, contact Heather Koncilja at [hkoncilja@azot.gov](mailto:hkoncilja@azot.gov)

## **Industry News**

### **Register now! Arizona Tourism Safety and Security Conference**

A full-day training conference dedicated to improving visitor and employee safety at tourism destinations and venues throughout Arizona will be presented Friday, November 3, 2006 at the Phoenix Convention Center. This deeper look into safety and security issues and trends within the tourism industry will be valuable to law enforcement and security professionals as well as tourism marketers, meeting planners, tour operators and hotel employees and managers. The cost to attend is \$109 before October 20 and includes lunch and all materials. Visit [www.AZTourismSafety.com](http://www.AZTourismSafety.com) for program details and online registration, or call 602-265-2252. Sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities are also available. Sponsored by Arizona State University's School of Community Resources & Development, the Arizona Hotel & Lodging Association and the Arizona Tourism Alliance

### **African American Travel Trends**

Before buying plane tickets, booking a hotel or checking out guidebooks, many African-Americans are turning to a source close to home to inspire their travel planning: each other. More precisely, they are seeking out travel clubs run by and for blacks. After a post-9/11 drop-off, organizations and gatherings promoting travel opportunities for blacks are reporting increased interest. As with any other travel organization, the missing of black travel groups is to provide travel counsel, assistance and camaraderie for their members. For a modest fee, they typically organize social mixers, orientation sessions, sports and adventure training, in addition to featuring two to six trips a year. (Houston Chronicle.com/Travel)

## **New Park Service Director is Confirmed**

Mary A. Bomar, a British native, has been confirmed by the Senate as director of the National Park Service. Bomar, who became a U.S. citizen in 1977, has worked for the Park Service for 17 years. She succeeds Fran Mainella. (Los Angeles Times.com; Page A23, New York Times)

## **Hotel Check-In**

Loews Hotels has launched a new corporate training program called "Living Loews." The program, begun in August, is meant to set Loews employees apart by their behavior, dress and personalized approach to sales. It is a combination of courses that cover behavior, communications, presentation, salesmanship, public speaking and etiquette--from how to put a new spin on a business pitch to how to hold a fork. It includes a new, more formal dress code and new words to replace tired hotel industry adjectives like "spacious" and "upscale." With all luxury hotels now offering the same great beds, special toiletries and flat-screen TV sets, it is becoming harder to stand out in this crowded segment of the lodging industry. (New York Times.com, 10/1)

## **A Boomer Road Trip**

With their kids out of the house and retirement on the horizon, many baby boomers are taking to the RV lifestyle in a big way, says US News & World Report, plunking down big bucks for the latest middle-age status symbol: the pied-a-terre on wheels. Buyers ages 35 to 54 now represent the largest and fastest-growing segment of the \$14 billion-a-year industry, according to a recent study by the University of Michigan, making up more than half of the 8 million RV-ing households in the U.S., up about 15% since 2001. The never-so-healthy-or-so-wealthy generation shows a growing interest in upscale RV resorts and new condo parks that feature everything from day-spa treatments to WiFi Internet connections.(US News & World Report.com, 10/9)

## **Weather Channel Launches Travel Site**

The Weather Channel has launched forGetaway.com, which provides vacation seekers easy navigation tools to help them find a vacation getaway. The site also makes it simple for vacation homeowners to list their properties and connect with potential renters. ForGetaway.com offers access to thousands of vacation rental homes in the world's top travel destinations, including St. Barts, Lake Tahoe and the Florida Panhandle. (ModernAgent.com)

## **Arizonan to Lead Department of Transportation**

The Senate confirmed President Bush's nomination of Mary Peters as the new secretary of transportation. Peters, a former federal highway administrator and head of the Arizona Department of Transportation, succeeds Norman Mineta, a Democrat who resigned in July after six years in office. (AP; Google.com)

## **One in 10 Leisure Travelers Go Solo**

About one in 10 leisure travelers hit the road alone, with men under age 35 leading the pack, according to the Travel Industry Association. Men age 18-34 years old account for 39 percent of solo men travelers, while women in the same age group represent 31 percent of women solo travelers. Men and women travelers between 35-49 years old each comprise 27 percent of solo

travelers. Among travelers age 65 and older, women represent 13 percent of solo travelers, and men 11 percent. Details at 202-408-2183. (Special to TA)

## **Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Victory**

*Letter from Travel Industry Association of America President Roger Dow on Oct. 2:*

In the closing hours of the 109th Congress, the travel and tourism industry achieved a great victory on the industry's top legislative priority when Congress approved extending the deadline for the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) from January 1, 2008 until June 1, 2009. This tremendous victory is the result of a nearly two-year integrated campaign led by TIA, TBR and a host of other national and local organizations.

The hundreds of TIA members who came to Washington, D.C., for the Travel Leadership Summit made a huge, positive impact on this issue. As one congressional office told the TIA staff, on the WHTI issue they heard us "loud and clear." Thank you for playing such an integral role in advocating for a reasonable extension of this deadline. This is exactly what can result when the industry rallies around a critical issue and gives life to the notion of "one industry, one voice."

It is deeply gratifying to achieve this success as a unified industry, particularly as we begin the process of educating policymakers on the key role travel and tourism can play in helping improve America's image around the world through the newly launched Discover America Partnership, which was introduced as part of the Travel Leadership Summit.

### **The Practical Effect on Travelers**

While the dust is still settling on this issue, our understanding is that the "air" portion of WHTI will still go into effect on or shortly after January 8, 2007. The industry supports WHTI implementation for air travelers since nearly all of those flying between the U.S. and neighboring countries are accustomed to carrying a passport. As for cruise and land border travel, we could see the passport or PASS card requirement beginning at some point in 2008 or early 2009.

The Departments of Homeland Security and State do not have to wait until June 2009 to start, but there is now a seven-point criteria they must comply with before commencing with the new document requirement, with the seventh requirement being a joining together of the cruise and land border deadlines. This extension is especially important for the cruise travel industry and their customers since the federal government had intended to impose a passport-only requirement beginning January 2007. Cruise passengers will now have additional time in which to comply, and will also have the option of obtaining the less expensive PASS card alternative for use on a cruise trip.

Throughout the legislative process, the travel industry has consistently supported WHTI, believing it will make our nation safer. We are steadfast advocates, however, for a reasonable implementation timeline so government can get the rule right the first time, and travelers inside and outside the United States have sufficient time to understand the new rules and obtain the

right document(s) in order to comply. We are grateful to the U.S. Congress for understanding this request and providing reasonable relief for the traveling public.

In addition to Senators Stevens and Leahy, the following Members of Congress were especially instrumental in the passage of the WHTI deadline extension: Senators Judd Gregg (New Hampshire) and Norm Coleman (Minnesota); and Representatives Tom Reynolds (New York); John Sweeney (New York); Louise Slaughter (New York); Hal Rogers (Kentucky); Jerry Lewis (California); Martin Sabo (Minnesota); and David Obey (Wisconsin). Many other Senators and Representatives also played a role in the successful effort to gain approval of the Stevens-Leahy Amendment.

We will continue to work with Congress, and the Departments of Homeland Security and State on this effort to enhance border security through WHTI, and will keep you apprised of any new developments. Again, thank you for being such an important part of a great legislative victory for travelers and the travel industry!